

Kosygin's ABM Reply Found to Be Limited

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Premier Kosygin's response on U.S.-Soviet missile talks was far more cautious than the go-ahead signal implied by President Johnson, informed sources said yesterday.

The White House, the State Department and Soviet officials all declined to release the text of the Kosygin message. But a number of sources familiar with it were surprised at the optimistic tone of news accounts based on Mr. Johnson's Thursday news conference.

President Johnson's statement was carefully phrased. Officials said they would stand by it, literally, as a justifiable characterization of the Soviet Premier's response.

The setting for the President's announcement, in the form of an opening statement at a specially called news conference, however, gave it the public impact of a major diplomatic breakthrough. The news attention given to it eclipsed Sen. Robert F. Kennedy's Vietnam proposals.

The Soviet Union, which has been extremely wary in publicly discussing any possibility of an accord with the United States on missile deployment, reacted with special caution to the President's statement. Initial Soviet press accounts of Mr. Johnson's news conference avoided any mention of his comment on missile.

Administration officials were uncertain yesterday as to how the Soviet Union will react publicly. Privately, Soviet sources expressed astonishment at headlined accounts of U.S.-Soviet "agreement."

Basically, according to informed sources, all that has happened is that Soviet Premier Kosygin has said private-

ly to President Johnson what Kosygin's position was publicly reported to be in Pravda on Feb. 15. Pravda reported then that Kosygin, in London, "declared that the Soviet Government was ready to discuss the problem of averting a new arms race, both in offensive and defensive weapons."

Kosygin also indicated at that time that the Soviet Union did not favor, as the President proposed in a Jan. 27 letter to Kosygin, a discussion just on limiting the deployment of antiballistic missile systems. "Defensive systems," Kosygin maintained, "which prevent at-

tack, are not the cause of the arms race . . ."

The United States, on Jan. 20, first indicated there was Soviet interest in exploring the President's proposal. Since then, American officials believe, the Soviet Union has been conducting its own internal review to determine whether, and how, the Soviets might get into serious negotiations with the United States on the overall arms race issue. The United States acknowledges that it has a 3-to-1 or 4-to-1 superiority in long range strategic missiles.

What President Johnson said Thursday was that Kosygin "confirmed the willingness of the Soviet Union to discuss means of limiting the arms race in offensive and defensive nuclear missiles." Mr. Johnson said "this exchange of views is expected to lead to further discussions of this subject in Moscow and with our allies."

Secretary of State Dean Rusk said yesterday the Kosygin message was received earlier this week.

From Moscow it was reported yesterday that U.S. Ambassador Llewellyn E. Thompson and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko are expected to confer on the subject next week. But the State Department emphasized that no talk yet has been scheduled.

It was also reported from Moscow that diplomatic sources there suggested that Thompson and Gromyko, in such a meeting, would seek only to lay out certain ground rules—in effect, to negotiate about the possibility of more meaningful talks later.

Only if that process produced agreement, it was noted, would it become possible to call in technical experts on both sides.

Secretary Rusk said yesterday that "we are encouraged

that the Soviet Union is willing to enter serious discussions on both defensive and offensive missiles." That too was an optimistic characterization, other sources said.

Rusk talked with newsmen after testifying in a closed hearing before a Senate Disarmament Subcommittee headed by Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.).

Gore suggested the creation of an international defense missile force, possibly with participation of the United Nations, equipped to shoot down any missiles that cross the North polar icecap.

Such a system, said Gore, would involve a defense line between Greenland and Kamchatka, Siberia, "which bisects the missile trajectory route" between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Rusk responded that "we welcome new ideas" and we will examine what might be done with an international force."